United Nations S/2000/459

Security Council

Distr.: General
22 May 2000

Original: English

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force

(for the period from 16 November 1999 to 19 May 2000)

I. Introduction

1. The present report gives an account of the activities of the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) during the last six months in pursuance of the mandate contained in Security Council resolution 350 (1974) and extended in subsequent resolutions, most recently by resolution 1276 (1999) of 24 November 1999.

II. Situation in the area and activities of the Force

2. During the period under review, the ceasefire in the Israeli-Syrian sector was maintained without serious incident, and the Force's area of operation remained calm. The Force supervised the area of separation by means of fixed positions and patrols to ensure that no military forces were in it. It also carried out fortnightly inspections of equipment and force levels in the areas of limitation. Liaison officers from the party concerned accompanied the inspection teams. Both sides continued to deny inspection teams access to some of their positions and imposed restrictions on the Force's freedom of movement.

3. The Force continued to assist the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) with facilities for mail and the passage of persons through the area of separation. Within the means available, medical treatment was provided to the local population on request. UNDOF and ICRC, in close cooperation with the authorities, facilitated student exchanges and other functions, including weddings, in the area of separation.

4. Minefields in the UNDOF area of operation, especially in the area of separation, continued to be a concern, posing a threat to UNDOF personnel and local inhabitants. Syrian engineers have cleared mines in this area, under UNDOF supervision.

5. The Force Commander and his staff maintained close contact with the authorities of Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic.

6. As at 30 April 2000, UNDOF comprised 1,053 troops from Austria (366), Canada (188), Japan (45), Poland (361) and Slovakia (93). The Force was also assisted by 78 military observers of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO). Major General Cameron Ross continued as Force Commander. A map showing the Force's deployment is attached.

III. Financial aspects

7. By its resolution 53/226 of 8 June 1999, the General Assembly appropriated the amount of $35.4 million gross for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 1999 to 30 June 2000. The proposed budget for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2000 to 30 June 2001 (A/54/732) is currently under consideration by the General Assembly. Subject to the Assembly's decision, the cost of maintaining UNDOF, at its currently authorized strength, is estimated at $34.9 million gross for the period beginning on 1 July 2000, exclusive of

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the amounts for the support account for peacekeeping operations and the United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi, Italy. Therefore, should the Council decide to extend the mandate of the Force beyond 31 May 2000, the cost of maintaining the Force will be limited to the amounts indicated above.

8. As at 30 April 2000, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNDOF for the period from the inception of the Force to 31 May 2000 amounted to $17 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations at the same date amounted to $2,109.7 million.

IV. Implementation of Security Council resolution 338 (1973)

9. In deciding in its resolution 1276 (1999) to renew the mandate of UNDOF for a further period of six months, the Security Council also called upon the parties concerned to implement immediately its resolution 338 (1973) and requested the Secretary-General to submit, at the end of the period, a report on the developments in the situation and the measures taken to implement that resolution. The search for a peaceful settlement in the Middle East and, in particular, the efforts undertaken at various levels to implement Security Council resolution 338 (1973) were dealt with in my report on the situation in the Middle East (A/53/550), submitted in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 52/54 of 9 December 1997.

V. Observations

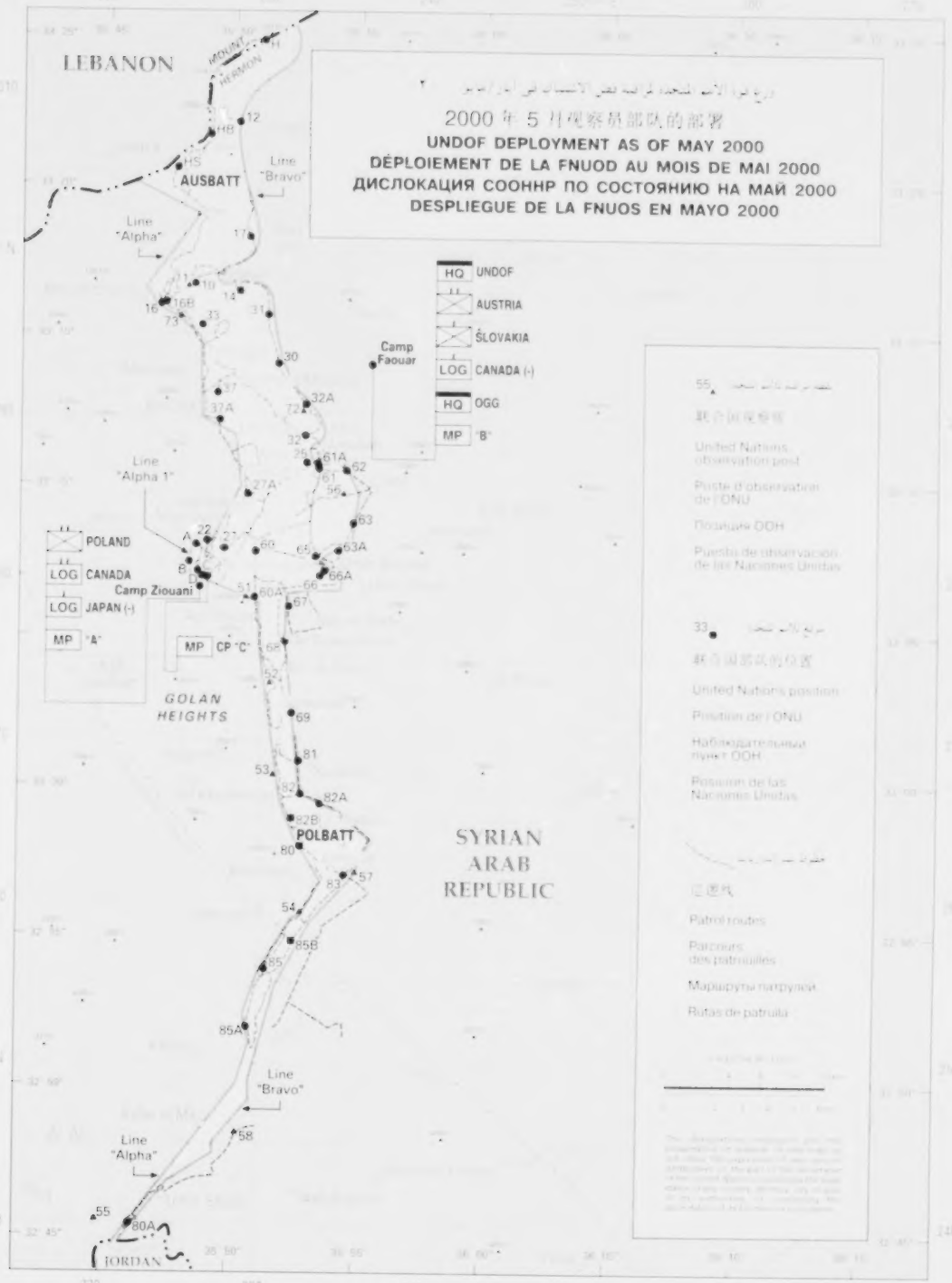
10. UNDOF, which was established in May 1974 to supervise the ceasefire called for by the Security Council and the agreement on disengagement between Israeli and Syrian forces of 31 May 1974, has continued to perform its function effectively, with the cooperation of the parties. The situation in the Israeli-Syrian sector has remained quiet.

11. Despite the present quiet in the Israeli-Syrian sector, the situation in the Middle East continues to be potentially dangerous and is likely to remain so, unless and until a comprehensive settlement covering all aspects of the Middle East problem can be reached. I hope that determined efforts will be made by all concerned to tackle the problem in all its aspects, with a view to arriving at a just and durable peace settlement, as called for by the Security Council in its resolution 338 (1973).

12. In the prevailing circumstances, I consider the continued presence of UNDOF in the area to be essential. I therefore recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of the Force for a further period of six months, until 30 November 2000. The Government of Israel has given its assent to the proposed extension. The Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has also expressed its agreement.

13. In making this recommendation, I must draw attention to the shortfall in the funding of the Force. At present, unpaid assessments amount to some $17 million. This sum represents money owed to all Member States that contribute the troops who make up the Force. I appeal to all Member States to pay their assessments promptly and in full and to clear all remaining arrears.

14. In conclusion, I wish to pay tribute to Major General Ross and the men and women serving with UNDOF. They have performed with efficiency and devotion to duty the important tasks assigned to them by the Security Council. I take this opportunity to express my appreciation to the Governments contributing troops to UNDOF and to those that provide the UNTSO military observers assigned to the Force.



Map No. 2916 Rev. 47 UNITED NATIONS
May 2000

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